

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Ward Assails Development Agency As Arrogant, Misguided



HARTFORD – House Republican Leader state Rep. Robert M. Ward today blasted the New London Development Corporation's continued efforts to evict New London property owners from their homes and "outrageous demands" for rent in light of the broad legislative support for a moratorium on any eminent domain proceedings.

Ward also again challenged Democrats to join Republicans in a special session immediately to put a moratorium formally in place to stop government from seizing private property for developers. Republicans were the first to go on record in support of a moratorium and shortly thereafter, on July 11, Democratic leaders also called for an immediate halt to any seizure proceedings.

"It is outrageous behavior on the part of the New London Development Corporation to continue to harass and threaten the people of Fort Trumbull by issuing eviction notices and demands of \$600 a month rent for homes that they own," Ward said. "The level of insensitivity and recklessness is appalling. This adds insult to injury"

At least two of the plaintiffs who challenged the NLDC's use of eminent domain in order to develop the property received notices to leave their premises within 90 days and begin paying rent to the NLDC. The case created national headlines this summer when it went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court which narrowly ruled the state's eminent domain laws were constitutional.

However, the court also invited Connecticut lawmakers to limit state statutes if they found the laws too broad. Ward in 2004 – before the case even made it to the highest court – and again this spring offered legislation to limit the use of eminent domain to public works projects such as school and roads.

"There is consensus that the laws are too broad. We have a responsibility to act now to protect homeowners," Ward said. "Apparently, the Democrats would rather hold public hearings and posture rather than act substantively."

Michael Cristofaro praised Ward for his efforts today and echoed the sentiments of other homeowners in the Fort Trumbull area.

"We are not going to move and we have no intention of paying the NLDC anything. This is a slap in the face to every property owner, not just in the state, but in the country. The NLDC doesn't feel it has to abide by any rules," he said.

The NLDC seized the property five years ago to turn it over to a private developer to build a hotel and other commercial projects.